

Using Surveys for Assessment

Best Practices in Assessment
April 3, 2013



Goals for the Workshop

All things considered

- ❑ before conducting a survey
- ❑ when developing survey questions
- ❑ when developing a questionnaire
- ❑ from administration to reporting

What to consider before conducting a survey?



What is your question/objective?

Know your question/objective-

- Be specific about what you want to know.
- Be clear about why you want to know it.
- Be clear about what you plan to do with the results.
- Make sure the information is not available elsewhere.
- Make sure this is the right source to get the information needed.

Who are you asking?

Knowing your population can affect:

- The survey design
- The questions asked
- The wording of the questions
- The way(s) you contact prospective participants
- The administration of the survey
- The response rate
- The results

How will the survey be administered?

- Paper Forms:
 - By mail
 - Face-to-face
- Telephone
- On-line

How will you analyze and report the results?

Answer will depend on:

- ❑ The purpose of the study (i.e. to describe, explain, predict or explore)
- ❑ Your audience (i.e. who will be using the results and/or report)
- ❑ The available software applications (i.e. Excel/SPSS/SAS)

What to consider when developing survey questions?



Survey Questions

There are two basic types:

- Open-ended
- Closed-ended/Partially Closed-ended

Open-ended Questions

Example: What should be done to improve this program?

Advantages:

- ❑ To supplement a close-ended question (e.g. to solicit and explanation of a particular answer)
- ❑ To explore a new topic
- ❑ To offer comments and suggestions
- ❑ To vent frustration
- ❑ To highlight issue(s) that is overlooked

Disadvantages:

- ❑ Often ignored by respondents because:
 - there are no answer choices
 - respondents must formulate their own answers
- ❑ Answers are extremely difficult to code, process and analyze
- ❑ Answers are hard to read

Closed-ended Questions

- Yes/No
- Multiple Choice
- Ranking
- Rating Scale

Yes/No Questions

Example: Have you used the BCC online tutoring resources?

Advantages:

- ❑ Useful in simple and complex analyses
- ❑ Useful as filter questions to create skip patterns.

Disadvantages:

- ❑ Provides little information
- ❑ Difficult to reduce complex information to yes/no
- ❑ Often boring for respondents

Multiple Choice Questions

Example: In which of the following ways have you used the BCC online tutoring resources?

Which one of the following components of the online resources was most helpful in

Advantages:

- Yields factual information
- Quick and easy to answer
- Easy to tabulate

Disadvantages:

- Difficulty including all possible answers
- More than one answer is often given
- Answers are usually categorical or ordered

Ranking Questions

Example: Please rank each factor below to indicate how important it is to you as a reason for your enrollment at BCC? Rank the most important reason '1'...

Advantages:

- ❑ Easy to understand

Disadvantages:

- ❑ Can be difficult to complete
- ❑ Assumes differences in respondent's rankings

Rating Scale Questions

Likert Scale

Example: My instructor grades fairly. Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

Advantages:

- Popular and easy to complete
- Efficient
- Good measure of attitudes and opinions
- Facilitate easy comparison of answers using the same scale

Disadvantages:

- Item are often ambiguous
- Not suitable for factual information

Rating Scale Questions

Semantic Scale

Example: Accessing your BCC email is:

Easy ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Difficult

Advantages:

- Efficient
- Facilitate easy comparison of answers using the same scale

Disadvantages:

- Directions can be difficult to write

Rating Scale Questions

Goal Attainment Scale

Example: Please review the skills listed below and try to assess what your expectations were when you started at BCC and if you met those expectations through your experiences while attending the college.

For example: How much did you expect to improve your communication skills in college and how much did you actually improve these skills?

Advantages:

- Measure the attainment of a goal
- Efficient
- Provides interpretation of answers
- Facilitate easy comparison of answers using the same scale

Disadvantages:

- Directions are difficult to write
- Completion can be frustrating and time consuming

Question Construction: Tips

- ❑ Use simple language
- ❑ Ask answerable questions
- ❑ Be specific in information required
- ❑ Define terms that may be unclear
- ❑ Ask interesting questions
- ❑ Be sensitive to cultural differences
- ❑ Ask questions that are quick to read, understand, and answer

Tips (continued)

- ❑ Avoid double negatives
- ❑ Avoid double barrel questions
- ❑ Avoid yes/no questions when possible
- ❑ Minimize biased questions
- ❑ Minimize fence sitting/ floating
- ❑ Avoid loaded and sensitive questions

**What to considering when
developing a questionnaire?**



Maximizing your response

Factors affecting response rate:

- ❑ The nature of your topic
- ❑ Your population's reaction to your topic
- ❑ Your consideration of your population
- ❑ The appearance of your study
- ❑ Survey/Questionnaire length

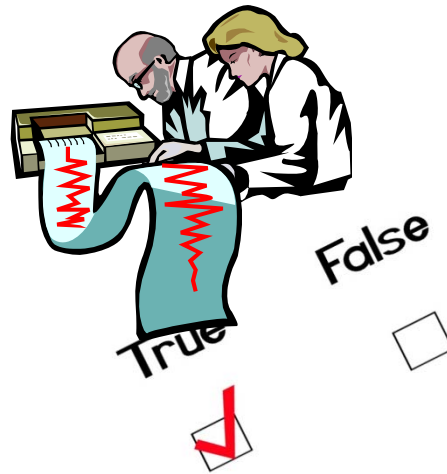
Formatting

- ❑ Choose first question carefully (i.e. easy to answer, interesting, general and impersonal).
- ❑ Order of remaining questions should be grouped logically and flow naturally.
- ❑ Keep questions addressing similar topic together.
- ❑ Group questions with the same format together.
- ❑ Keep use of contingency questions to a minimum.
- ❑ Save the sensitive, complex, boring, and open-ended questions for last.

Other Considerations

- ❑ Always include directions
- ❑ Do you need to know who is responding?
- ❑ Close with a 'Thank you' (if applicable, directions on how to return completed questionnaires)
- ❑ Check for spelling and grammar
- ❑ Stack responses (esp. for multiple choice questions)
- ❑ Provide space for your check marks (e.g. O, __, (), [])
- ❑ Leave plenty of 'white space,' if possible
- ❑ Use color paper

From Administration to Reporting



From Administration: A Few Words

- ❑ State the purpose of the survey. Consider an email, cover letter, introductory script
- ❑ State how the results will be used
- ❑ Include promise of confidentiality
- ❑ Always include a title and identify the sponsor
- ❑ Consider the length of your collection period
- ❑ Consider reminders, if applicable
- ❑ Incentives
- ❑ Respect your population/respondents

To Results: More Than Words

The type of instrument (online or paper) will determine the treatment of the completed surveys.

Be prepared to edit(clean) responses

- Code to lighten your load
 - text to numeric for closed-ended questions
 - thematic coding of open-ended questions

What types of analyses will be done?

- Frequencies/counts and percentages
- Crosstabs
- More complex analyses (statistical)

To Results: More Than Words

Reporting Results

- Identify limitations, if applicable
- Small samples/responses and the ability to generalize
- Know/anticipate your audience
- Verbal, written or graphic
- What is nice to know or what really matters

The Center for Institutional Effectiveness

IR is here to help!

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Please come with a draft of your questions!!

Questions

